WORKERS VANGUARD

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No. 1187 | October 2025

AMERICAN DYSTOPIA
Dig In, Don't Give Up!

It looks like a dystopian movie, only this is real life. Masked ICE gunmen are terrorizing our cities and a large layer of the working class. The federal government is shut down, and thousands of workers, disproportionately black, are to lose their jobs altogether while social services are cut. Racist purges launched in the name of ending DEI programs are the spear tip of government union-busting, beginning with the mass firing of air traffic workers earlier this year. Following Trump's lead, Boeing is moving to permanently replace more than 3,000 striking Machinists in the St. Louis area. Coal miners in Appalachia are succumbing to black lung as safety standards are torn up and healthcare is stripped away. Adding to the chaos and uncertainty, threatened tariff wars are whipsawing an economy that is tumbling toward recession.

The shredding of democratic rights has put trade unionists who object to government policy in the crosshairs, like the UAW local president fired for participating in pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University. Journalists, vaccine scientists, government statisticians, museum directors and even comedians are ordered to tell their ruler what he wants to hear or else they're out of a job. Now, the Feds are preparing a massive spying operation on social media to ferret out dissent. The purpose of all this is to intimidate the working class into total submission.

The picture is bleak, and only going to get bleaker. Trump has a mandate from his fellow billionaires to reshape society to better suit their strategic objective of continued world domination, and so

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Palestine
Kill the Deal!

Alex Brandon/AP

Ali Jadallah/Anadolu

White House, September 29: Netanyahu and Trump cement plan for further colonial subjugation of Palestine. October 10: Gazans return to devastated Gaza City following ceasefire (right).

The following is a reprint of an October 8 Spartacist *supplement.*

The genocide in Gaza must stop. But only fools can expect Trump and Netanyahu to bring peace to the Middle East. The plan they unveiled on September 29 demands total capitulation by the Palestinian resistance and offers only further colonial subjugation. Although it is easy for any pro-Palestine observer to see how this deal is obscene and would be a disaster, answering what should be done is much more difficult. The Palestinian resistance finds itself in a corner. The humanitarian situation in Gaza is only getting worse, there is no way to defeat Israel militarily. And there is a strong sentiment that this conflict must end. Moreover, the diplomatic pressure is extremely intense, with the whole world lining up behind Trump.

It may appear on the surface that making major concessions, such as releasing the hostages, accepting a technocratic government and disarming, will bring an end to the suffering. But the truth is that it will only give Israel a free hand to exterminate the Palestinians. Just look at what happened in 1982, when the armed Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) fighters acceded to withdrawing from Lebanon. This opened the road for the Sabra and Shatila massacres, marginalized the PLO and paved the way for the Oslo Accords. To retreat from defeat and live to fight another day is one thing. But to leave the population of Gaza defenseless in the face of Israeli tyranny is another. We must say in one voice: ***No capitulation!***

Sabra and Shatila Must Not Be Repeated!

Still the question remains: How to stop the genocide? Trump as always is full of bluster and threats, promising to annihilate Hamas if it does not accept the deal. There is no doubt that the resistance in Gaza has been dealt severe blows,

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Dystopia...

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he moves with the force of twelve titans. A significant section of the working class endorses Trumpism because the liberals in years past crushed workers economically while spitting "woke" insults in their faces from the halls of power. The liberal politicians taught workers to equate defense of the oppressed with financial ruin, and now Trump has many workers breathing fire against immigrants, black people and other oppressed minorities. These divisions are toxic to class solidarity—i.e., to the recognition of the shared interest in banding together to make the strongest possible defensive stand against the onslaught.

While many workers are in the MAGA camp, most of the rest are either fatigued or fearful—not wanting to step out into the open, where they could easily get sucked into the madness. This sense of helplessness is greatly compounded by the betrayals of the union leaders, who are rolling over before the Trump juggernaut. They tell their ranks: Just work hard, pray hard and wait for the midterm elections and courts to bring deliverance. They might as well have just advised workers to lay down on the tracks and wait for the train. The union tops are totally constrained by their support to the U.S. rulers' mission of remaining the top power on the world stage. Thus, the dwindling number of strikes they are forced to lead remain isolated and highly vulnerable to defeat. They completely demoralize those workers whose impulse is to fight.

The hurricane winds are battering advanced workers too. These workers have been striking matches hoping to spark class struggle, but nothing is igniting. They stand between two pitfalls: demoralized paralysis and reckless acts that will only result in their victimization. For black and Latino vanguard fighters, the ever-present pressures of existence in this brutal racist society are also acutely felt and an additional drag on the maintenance of a political life. The realities of segregation and the state terrorizing their families can be overwhelming.

WV Photo

August 25: IAM picket line at Boeing plant, St. Louis, Missouri. Pro-imperialist union misleaders have kept strike isolated as company threatens to permanently replace Machinists.

What are communist workers to do? In short, they must dig in for the long haul. The objective situation will not always be as bleak as it is right now. It is necessary to prepare the ground and position themselves to have maximum impact when workers are again ready to fight for their interests.

To begin, advanced workers cannot substitute for the class. Their numbers are far too small. But all hope is not lost—vanguard fighters in the class must reach into the toolbox of scientific socialism, which can provide an understanding of developments and the best means to defend the immediate interests of the working class. The reason for the power of these tools is simple: They are precision-forged to advance the working class from being flat on its back right now all the way to the point where it is running industry and society.

There is a way for workers to withstand the attacks raining down on them: collective defense of all the oppressed, even though nothing of the sort is happening right now. The moral appeals of liberalism are less than useless to turn this around. They certainly are not going to convince workers who were drawn to the right out of disgust with the liberals to break from Trump. And they are not going to guilt-trip into action workers who are biding their time out of a deep sense of self-preservation. No, the only thing that has a chance of setting either group of workers in motion is appeals to their self-interest. Understanding what is going on is the first step to begin chipping away at the problems before us.

This recognition gives union militants the potential to speak to what workers need and exert influence far beyond their actual numbers. But that hardly settles the question. This country's proletariat is up against the planet's most powerful and organized ruling class. The media, schools and churches at the capitalists' command, and their loyal servants in the union bureaucracy, keep workers' minds trapped in a spiderweb of confusion and passivity. The rightward shift in society and heightened racial and other polarizations exert their own strong pulls that are not so easy to counter. Advanced workers cannot and should not be looking to work miracles under these circumstances.

Patience is a must. One has to be there in order to painstakingly explain what needs to be done and why without expecting immediate results. Building authority takes time, consistency and persistence and requires stepping up when the occasion warrants. It is important to push back against workers who are retreating into individualism—cutting themselves off from other workers on the basis of race, immigration status, gender, craft and so on. Such dividing lines are barriers to solid collective defense and equally harmful to the worker in retreat and others at the workplace.

To start to transform the unions into bulwarks of defense, militants in their ranks must seek openings, however small, to unite workers across race, craft and partisan (Democrat vs. Republican) lines in collective action. Even a partial victory against the bosses is a blow against the dog-eat-dog mentality at the workplace and preparation for bigger struggles in the future. One such case is the campaign to reinstate two L.A. Metro bus drivers disciplined for speaking out about defense of immigrant riders (see article on page 10). Small wins open workers' minds to hear militants' views on the two capitalist parties and the need to oppose all divisions in the working class.

To make such wins possible, it is necessary to maintain an awareness of what is happening on the job and in the industry as well as the country and world. No workplace is immune from larger trends outside its walls, but every workplace is unique. It is not possible to intervene effectively if one is not plugged in.

This country appears to be fast approaching a turning point. As things get even tougher and problems mount, giving up politics might seem like a way to get some breathing space. But problems, especially political problems, do not go away by cutting oneself off from active participation in politics. Instead, doing so only leaves an advanced worker without their strongest shield against the capitalist storm: the revolutionary vanguard. If anything, the all-sided dangers of this treacherous time are reason to draw closer with a like-minded cadre organization that has at its fingertips the hard-learned lessons of many decades of working-class struggle and is looking to apply those lessons to the present day, to the advantage of the class and all the oppressed.

As a result of collaboration with these cadres, union militants not only gain an anchor to stabilize themselves in tumultuous waters and a true compass for navigation, but also enrich the revolutionary organization itself through their intersection with social reality and efforts to shape it—creating a positive feedback loop to counter the negative. One example was the recent Spartacist League/U.S.-sponsored workers conference, which sought to orient advanced workers in this difficult period (see "Labor Under Trump: What Union Militants Should Do," *WV* No. 1186, August 2025).

Holding on to the lifeline provided by an organization of vanguard fighters can make all the difference when it comes to keeping one's head above water and being able to emerge stronger when the masses move again. Working together with others who direct all their efforts toward the same goal is the surest way to make sense of the chaos, identify opportunities to push back and sharpen one's tools to avoid tunnel vision, national narrowness and collapse. The vanguard organization also has a wealth of knowledge of the classic Marxist works to direct and deepen the study of past struggles that is so vital for grounding right now. Communist workers, in combination with the nucleus of a revolutionary party, are active factors in holding the line for the working class. That sense of purpose is invaluable as America becomes dystopian. ■

Letter

On ICL's Reorientation

Springfield, MA
6 June 2025

Workers Vanguard,

As a longtime reader of Workers Vanguard, I was initially baffled and hostile to the ICL's reorientation. What did you mean by liberalism? Weren't you always fighting against it? Were you about to liquidate into the rapidly evaporating reformist swamp? Were you turning your back on your principles and history of struggle, junking Spartacism in all but name?

I sided with the Internationalist Group and Bolshevik Tendency in the debates, but remained unconvinced for a long time as to who had the best understanding of reality and what way forward, crucially on the biggest issues facing any self-described leftist. How to best oppose US imperialism as it spreads carnage in Ukraine, genocide in Palestine, and misery at home and across the globe? How to convince other leftists to break from empty moralism, sectarianism and adventurism? How to move the working class with Marxism?

Over time, I became convinced that your reorientation was correct and overdue. I'm impressed by the concreteness of your analysis and calls for action, the non-sectarian, comradely approach to other leftists, clearly spelling out differences with suggestions for common work. I applaud your approach to the working class and oppressed, challenging different prejudices, driving a class wedge in your modest defense work and campaigns. I love the latest issue of Spartacist, the relaunch of Women & Revolution, your international press, YouTube videos and SpartTalk. I could offer my two cents on a number of issues, but more concretely, I want to resubscribe to Workers Vanguard, and donate to your press and the Partisan Defense Committee.

Yours in solidarity,
Joel

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Kirk Still Needs to Be Proved Wrong

We reprint below a September 22 Workers Vanguard *supplement.*

The fallout from the assassination of reactionary ideologue Charlie Kirk has only just begun. However, one thing is clear: The initial celebrations on social media were beyond dim, as an already bad situation is quickly becoming far worse. We certainly will not mourn his absence, but he should not have been killed.

Now, the right—both here and internationally—has a martyr. Trump and his advisors wasted no time in calling for vengeance against the left. Everyone from MAGA activists to bona fide fascists has picked up this rallying cry. The day after Kirk's death, a number of historically black colleges were locked down in the face of physical threats. A severe crackdown is in the making against anyone perceived to be standing in the way of the Trump agenda—not least workers across the political spectrum protesting against their miserable conditions.

Individual terror is never the road forward and always invites greater state repression. But in some cases, like this one, it greatly amplifies the country's partisan polarization and will only bring disaster for the oppressed. In contrast, the killing of the UnitedHealthcare CEO late last year struck a chord across the political spectrum and for good reason. As the head of a parasitic outfit that had denied lifesaving healthcare to millions, he was drenched in blood. The same could not be said of Kirk, who made a name for himself by skewering liberals in college campus debates.

Kirk was smugly confident in his arguments, especially when the liberals just wanted to denounce him as racist, transphobic, etc. While the epithets were accurate, this attempted shaming did nothing to prove Kirk wrong nor to diminish his appeal. These exchanges were symbolic of the current political terrain. The previous liberal status quo, having outlived its usefulness to the ruling class, is dead and gone; and the right is firmly in command. The opponents of Kirk by and large see no other option than to resort to acts of desperation. His assassination was just that and in its own way, the logical extension of cancel culture, which seeks to silence rather than refute opposing viewpoints. And it, like the liberals' empty moral exhortations, is if anything solidifying support for Kirk's repugnant views.

A sure sign of the liberals' inability to answer Kirk was and still is their commonly branding him a fascist. Kirk was not the head of a murderous gang—i.e., a fascist organization—which the ruling class falls back on when it can no longer afford political debate. These shock troops of reaction must be decisively crushed, including through armed self-defense when necessary. But that does not describe Kirk's Turning Point USA (TPUSA), a fast-growing, mainstream conservative youth movement on campuses across the country. Its program is unmistakably reactionary, but Kirk was not recruiting students to kill leftists and minorities or physically break up unions. Rather, he peddled backward ideas that ***must be exposed and politically defeated***.

Gage Skidmore

April 2022: Charlie Kirk (seated) debating with University of California, Berkeley students during his "Educate, Don't Mandate" campus tour.

An Actual Working-Class Answer

Kirk's arguments still need to be answered. The liberals, who view social problems as fundamentally moral in nature, have not been able to. They just got tied in knots and ended up denying reality. To date, the Marxist left has not done any better, in large part because they have long embraced the liberal framework. So, let's turn this around and start unpacking some of the more controversial things Kirk said:

> *"If we would have said that Joy Reid and Michelle Obama and Sheila Jackson Lee and Ketanji Brown Jackson were affirmative action picks, we would have been called racist. But now they're coming out and they're saying it for us…they're saying I'm only here because of affirmative action. Yeah, we know. You do not have the brain processing power to otherwise be taken really seriously. You had to go steal a white person's slot"* (*The Charlie Kirk Show* podcast, 13 July 2024).

This gem has been widely cited since Kirk's death. The typical exchange over it follows a familiar pattern. Liberal: Kirk was a racist who smeared black women as lacking brain processing power. Right-winger (see Vice President JD Vance while hosting Kirk's podcast from the White House): No, he did not say that; he was talking about those four particular black women. Liberal: Well, Kirk is a racist for insulting the intelligence of those four black women, and Vance is a racist for defending him. And so, the liberals make themselves feel good, while the right promises to unleash all hell on them—and no light is shed on anything.

On one level, it is not so hard to poke holes in Kirk's argument. Slots, whether at an elite university or a high-profile job, have never been rewarded exclusively or even primarily based on brain processing power. Nepotism and money loom rather large here. Countless white people fill positions they did not earn other than by the accident of birth. Furthermore, as most any worker can attest, managers usually do not know even half of what it takes to get the job done right, but they bark orders and throw their weight around like they have something real to contribute. And there are plenty of politicians on both sides of the aisle, federal judges of different political bents and talking heads on Fox News and MSNBC alike who are far from the brightest bulbs.

But these observations only scratch the surface, and we would do well to delve deeper. Kirk is not just targeting four random black women, but rather members of the black elite whose interests and outlook are far removed from the black masses. And they are not just four random members of the black elite, but rather strong defenders of the old liberal order, which draped itself in noble ideals as white and all other workers (including most black people) got economically pounded.

The election of Barack Obama (which Reid had a hand in as his 2008 campaign press secretary) was supposed to bring "hope and change" and signal the country's near-complete transformation into a post-racial society. Instead, it just made a black man the overseer of the plantation. The Obama administration focused all its energy on digging the bankers and bosses out of major financial crisis at the expense of workers—and black people were the first to be thrown out of their homes and jobs.

The less the liberals had to offer materially to workers and the poor, the more they leaned into grand "woke" gestures to cling to power. So, Biden made a 2020 campaign promise to appoint the first black woman Supreme Court justice—and he later picked Jackson to great fanfare from the White House, while most were choking on the rampant inflation he had stoked. Lee was a staunch ally of both Biden and Obama. In short, these four black women played a forward role on behalf of a wing of the ruling class that was keeping the bulk of the population down—not least black people. These are not success stories to cheer about.

At the time of the Supreme Court's ban on race-based affirmative action in university admissions (when Kirk made the above comment), the first three spoke publicly in defense of such programs as past beneficiaries, and Jackson issued a strongly worded dissent to the ban. Here is the fundamental problem: Liberal affirmative action initiatives, implemented in the name of righting historic crimes, can do nothing of the sort. But they were guaranteed to create tensions that explode into a full-scale backlash against the historically oppressed population, especially in a stagnating society.

How so? In the context of a fixed number of openings at a university, to give preference for a slot to a black student is to disadvantage white and other non-black candidates. The same goes in the case of DEI efforts in hiring practices. Under the pressures of a sinking economy, this competition, especially for more prized positions, was bound to heat up and boil over. To top it off, these token measures were always just lipstick on the ugly face of segregated America. They gave a bit of a boost to the relatively small black middle class amid deepening segregation in housing, education and other areas. From the standpoint of the ruling class, affirmative action and DEI were ways to bask in the glow of diversity, all the better to maintain the muck of racial oppression and keep the working class divided—up until it recently decided to toss aside the liberal cover altogether.

Kirk was playing to the swindle at the heart of affirmative action and DEI. The liberals expect white working people to just swallow shrinking opportunities for themselves out of moral obligation to others. But he did so in order to falsely conclude that there are no barriers whatsoever to the advancement of black people in the U.S. today other than their supposed "victim mentality" and what he described as cultural problems like absentee fathers. On the latter point, he shared a certain convergence with Obama; and Kirk was also fond of presenting the U.S. as post-racial. So, while the liberals blame white youth and workers ("white privilege") for black people's wretched conditions, Kirk blamed black people themselves for the same and for holding back white youth

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J. Scott Applewhite/AP

October 2022: Liberal activists protest outside Supreme Court during oral arguments in cases that ended affirmative action in college admissions, Washington, D.C.

Puerto Rico

How to Get the Working Class Behind Independence

WV Photo

March for Independence of Puerto Rico, San Juan, August 31. Spartacist League/U.S. comrades participated, fighting for unity of independence and workers struggles in U.S., Puerto Rico and beyond against common imperialist enemy.

Puerto Rico has been pushed to the brink as the masses face deepening poverty and basic infrastructure collapses. Now, as the Trump administration looks to strengthen U.S. imperialism's global dominance, it will turn the screws on Puerto Rico even more. The masses are angry about their situation and want a way out of the misery. The August 31 "Marcha por la Independencia de Puerto Rico" brought out about 3,000 people, most of whom were young activists with no political affiliation. The depth of the crisis in Puerto Rico explains why people turned out to the first pro-independence demo in many years. This showed the desire to be free and control one's destiny as the social and political decay makes the futures of Boricuas uncertain.

But while the pro-independence march was a step forward, it still fell short as a few thousand people in the streets is not enough to successfully fight the root cause of Puerto Rico's dire situation. To push the struggle for independence forward and truly be free, there needs to be a massive movement of the Boricua masses against U.S. imperialism. Even those in attendance made the point that a larger turnout is needed. But they blamed the lack of numbers on people being "misinformed" about independence. If that's the case, then how do you get people out?

Do Militant Work in the Unions

To wage a serious battle against imperialism requires the participation of the working class. But this key component was missing from the August 31 demo. Rumbo Alterno (the Puerto Rican affiliate of the Revolutionary Communist International) says in their demo leaflet "Why Do We Fight for Independence?" that "the great absence in this debate has been the working class." And other left groups, from the Democracia Socialista (DS) to the Workers Socialist Movement (MST) and Communist Workers and Students for Social Change (TECCS), also talk about the need for the working class to be involved in the movement.

The reason the working class was not an organized force at the demo is that they do not see any connection between the cause of independence and their everyday lives. The labor leadership is largely to blame for this, as they continuously betray the day-to-day needs of the working class while talking militantly about independence, only to betray that struggle too. As for the left, let's be real. The working class does not take the left seriously because the left has no real plan to fight U.S. imperialism and is incapable of giving workers answers to their daily issues. This needs to change—Boricua revolutionaries must make it their task to win the confidence of the working class.

The first step to winning this confidence is to show you have a clue. The main way to do this is to clearly demonstrate the connection between the fight for economic demands and the fight against imperialist domination. The union bureaucracy purposely keeps these separate. Making this connection is not difficult when the colonial masters control all aspects of everyday life and strip workers of good wages, pensions and jobs.

It is critical for revolutionaries to do militant work in the unions and set up anti-imperialist caucuses that oppose the capitulatory policies of the current labor leadership. There are many union leaders who speak about the attacks on the working class. But their strategy is to curb the worst excesses of privatization and colonial domination instead of fighting against the imperialist bosses. This failure has only worsened conditions and reinforced national oppression.

The worst example of this is the takeover of the PREPA power authority by LUMA. The UTIER union leadership has opposed privatization from the outset, but their idea of fighting back was to organize a series of one-day strikes that never challenged the imperialists' stranglehold on the island. These strikes rallied mass opposition to the privatization of energy. But instead of harnessing that anger and directing it against colonial subjugation, the UTIER leadership narrowed the fight to simply canceling LUMA's contract. There's nothing wrong with wanting to cancel the contract, but if that fight is not linked to opposing the imperialist domination of the island, another U.S. company will just step in.

There are plenty of union leaders who consider themselves independentistas, but they don't mobilize the unions to fight for independence or foster an anti-imperialist attitude in the class. Revolutionaries doing militant work in the labor movement must contend for leadership of the unions and the independence struggle by showing workers that they should fight for independence not for the sake of moral obligation, but because they are the key to the national liberation struggle. To win the confidence of the working class, revolutionaries must put forward a real plan to fight against the island's colonial subjugation. The working masses must also be instilled with confidence in their power to fundamentally change their day-to-day situation. It's a combination of a working class moving to break their colonial shackles and a communist leadership with a plan to fight imperialism that will draw out the masses.

The left doesn't do any of this. Instead, they opt for a non-aggression pact with the labor bureaucracy. This doesn't help the movement, as being associated with a leadership that continues to sell out the class only makes the left look like sellouts too. But the left doesn't see it that way. To them, every Puerto Rican associated with the labor movement, especially its leadership, is automatically fighting for the best interest of the class. This idealistic and moralistic framework disarms workers by burying how the labor bureaucracy's program is an obstacle to winning decent conditions and advancing the fight for independence.

Push an Anti-Imperialist Option in Elections

The left's refusal to expose the labor bureaucracy isn't the only way they undermine the confidence of the class. When not alibiing the labor misleaders, they look to petty-bourgeois forces to lead the independence struggle. In their article "Socialist Democracy and the Fight for Independence" (1 September), the DS wrote that independence is needed, adding: "An independence that builds an egalitarian, supportive and ecological country.… The only way to achieve ***that*** independence is through the organization of working people and all oppressed sectors in defense of their interests."

We could not agree more. But the DS, which claims to be anti-imperialist, helped create one half of La Alianza: the Citizen's Victory Movement, whose whole basis is to not call for independence. This attracted pro-statehood and pro-status quo elements to the group. When it comes to La Alianza's other half headed by Dalmau, the left knew he was not fighting imperialism and had dropped the fight for independence to form that rotten coalition. But they still pushed Dalmau as the candidate to defeat González and said La Alianza was a step in the right direction.

Many young activists who attended the August 31 demo still believe this to be true. It is a contradiction that pro-independence militants at a demo to fight for independence (and against imperialism) would believe that La Alianza, which never claimed to be for either struggle, was worth supporting. But the left's gradualist strategy fooled young militants into thinking that Puerto Rico can make gains within the confines of imperialist subjugation. An illusion like this is deadly as such a strategy would only ensure that Borikén is held down even more by the colonial masters.

To change the island's political and social conditions requires the masses to move against the imperialists, not beg them for a few more crumbs while accepting the status quo. This is exactly what La Alianza's political platform clearly stated: They would not throw out La Junta and would continue to pay the imperialist-imposed debt. This is a complete capitulation to U.S. imperialism. La Alianza's program could never bring fundamental change to the island because that would require unleashing the revolutionary potential of the working class. And that's something they would never do because it would threaten their own petty-bourgeois class interests, such as maintaining private property and being next in line to administer colonial rule.

It cannot be stressed enough that an organization that doesn't center their program on the need to fight imperialism will never be a step in the right direction, but will only reinforce the national oppression of Borikén. Looking to petty-bourgeois forces to somehow lead the fight for national liberation has always been a disaster. But this is exactly what most of the left did and what makes the line of the DS article on independence and "the organization of the working people" so cheap.

What revolutionaries should've done was put forward an anti-imperialist option in the elections. This would've facilitated the building of a party for independence and socialism, which left groups like Rumbo Alterno call for, but buried at election time in order to support Dalmau. Having an anti-imperialist candidate would've polarized the elections and split the left between those who are genuine fighters for national liberation and those looking to conciliate imperialism. It also would have polarized the right and galvanized those who see voting as a waste of time. This potential is squandered every time the left tails petty-bourgeois forces. Without an anti-imperialist party, the oppressed masses will not be able to break the chains of their colonial subjugation and advance the fight for independence. But the concept of an anti-imperialist option in elections is nowhere to be found on the Puerto Rican political terrain, leaving the working masses who saw through Dalmau to choose between the New Progressive Party or the Popular Democratic Party.

This is what makes it wrong to abstain from the elections, like TECCS did. Its refusal to give workers an option that could help them fight back left Dalmau unchallenged, even though TECCS saw that La Alianza had nothing to offer the Boricua masses but more of the same. It is true that you will not win independence through elections, but it is still important to fight on this terrain because the working class is paying attention to what each party and candidate is saying, whether they are voting or not. When workers see an option that speaks to their felt needs and provides a path forward to independence and socialism, it will only bring them closer to the struggle. This is why Boricua communists must intervene in every arena to expose the conciliators of colonial rule, from the elections to the unions, and to show workers that the only way to end their brutal exploitation and

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WV Photo

Spartacists endorsed and spoke at Puerto Rican independence march in Jersey City, New Jersey, August 31.

Defend Venezuela and Mexico Against U.S. Imperialism

We reprint below a translation of an article originally appearing in *El Anti-imperialista* No. 4 (October 2025), publication of the Grupo Espartaquista de México. Since then, the U.S. imperialists have intensified their threats against Mexico (whose president is Claudia Sheinbaum) and Venezuela (whose president is Nicolás Maduro). On October 14, the Pentagon announced a fifth attack against a boat in international waters in the Caribbean, bringing the official tally of victims of these attacks to 27 dead.

The U.S. imperialists, who are tightening their grip on Latin America and the Caribbean, are the same ones putting this country's multiracial working class through the grinder in order to shore themselves up. Forging an anti-imperialist alliance of workers in the Americas is essential to increase their capacity to fight back to the fullest extent against the common enemy. By opposing the imperialist subjugation of Mexico, Venezuela and the rest of Latin America and championing the national rights of Quebec, workers in the U.S. would be strengthening the defense of their own interests. As part of its provocations against Venezuela, the U.S. military has moved advanced F-35 fighter jets to a reopened military base in Puerto Rico, underlining the importance of the fight for the independence of the U.S. colony to the struggle against imperialism in the region.

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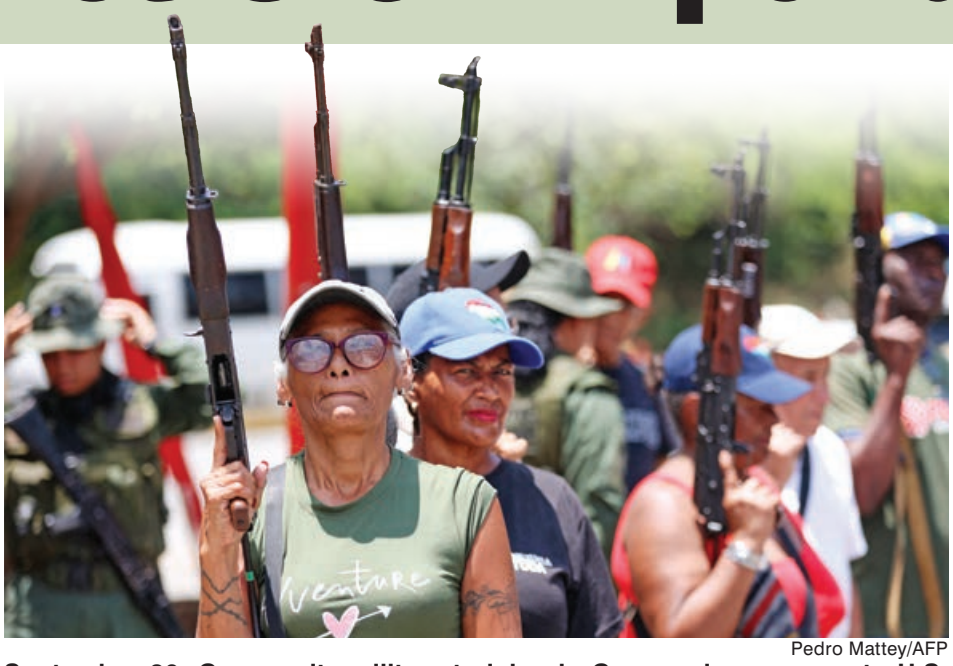
IPOR LA EMANCIPACIÓN OBRERA Y NACIONAL!
EL ANTIIMPERIALISTA

Under the pretext of a war on foreign "narco-terrorists," Trump has deployed eight warships, several Navy P-8 aircraft and an attack submarine near the Venezuelan coast. This enormous military force has already claimed its first victims. According to the U.S. government, three small boats and their crews have been extrajudicially destroyed. Trump is threatening similar actions by land and air and has set a $50 million bounty for the capture of Nicolás Maduro.



Pedro Mattey/AFP

September 20: Community military training in Caracas in response to U.S. bombing of boats off Venezuelan coast.

The purpose of this mobilization is to overthrow a regime that has not blatantly subordinated itself to the will of the U.S. and that has ties to China and Russia. It is the duty of all workers organizations to defend Venezuela with a program based on independence from the Maduro regime and other populists. The military encirclement is also a measure of control over the entire Caribbean, as well as a warning to all Latin American countries that they must align themselves with Trump or face the consequences. These aggressions are in addition to the terrible sanctions against Cuba, tariffs, mass deportations, the "reconquest" of the Panama Canal, etc. ***U.S.: Hands off Venezuela, the Caribbean and all of Latin America!***

The classification of Mexican drug cartels as terrorist organizations is a measure that will be used against anyone who even minimally stands up to the imperialists. The president proclaims that she will not accept U.S. interference in security matters and that this is all about cooperation. Meanwhile, more than 10,000 U.S. troops have been mobilized to the border, drones and aircraft are flying over our airspace, ships are being deployed to Mexican territorial waters and imperialist security agencies are operating here as if it were business as usual. Trump has Sheinbaum's government by the throat, and he has made it very clear that he can accuse Mexican politicians—including members of Morena—of links to organized crime if they do not accept his conditions. The memorandum of understanding signed during Marco Rubio's visit tramples on Mexico's sovereignty and undermines the country's defense against Trump's attacks. All of Sheinbaum's rhetoric about "collaboration without subordination" actually serves as a fig leaf for the imperialists' ongoing operations. The labor movement and all anti-imperialist militants must speak out and demand: ***DEA, CIA and all imperialist agencies out of Mexico!***

The national bourgeoisies of Latin America, including those seeking to resist (albeit timidly) the diktats of the U.S., are incapable of consistently fighting the imperialist boot and ending their country's subordination. Sheinbaum, Petro, Lula and Maduro limit the struggle against imperialism to their own goals and methods, so as not to threaten private property—that is, they reject those measures that could deal a bigger and more effective blow to the imperialists. For now, they have political hegemony over the struggle for national liberation, and the oppressed of the region look to them with hope. But in the end, they will seek to accommodate themselves to the new order at the expense of the masses.

It is necessary for revolutionaries to enter the fray as the best anti-imperialist fighters. This includes reaching temporary agreements with the national bourgeoisie—such as for the defense of Maduro against the current onslaught—in order to expose, in the struggle, its vacillations and capitulations. Only a communist leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle can unify the Latin American working masses and forge an invincible collaboration with the proletariat of the U.S., Canada and Quebec, which are also suffering under the attacks of U.S. imperialism. ***For an anti-imperialist united front of the Americas to fight against Trump! For a socialist federation of Latin America!*** ■

Defend Malema and the EFF

South Africa

The below article was originally printed as an AmaBolsheviki Amnyama *supplement published by Spartacist/South Africa on October 8.*

AMABOLSHEVIKI AMNYAMA

The East London Magistrate Court's 1 October ruling against EFF leader Julius Malema is an outrageous attack which must be fought by all of us! While Malema and the EFF are the immediate targets, make no mistake: This is a deadly threat to ***everyone*** in South Africa who stands up against imperialism, black oppression, austerity and attacks on the working class. Every one of us, regardless of our other political differences, has a vital and direct interest in mounting a concerted struggle to overturn this ruling.

The court found Malema guilty on five gun-related charges in a case instigated by AfriForum ***seven years ago*** after he allegedly fired a rifle into the air during the EFF's fifth birthday celebration. Only fools will believe that this ruling, which carries the possibility of a 15-year sentence, is about "gun safety." The racists of AfriForum have been after Malema's head ever since the EFF's founding, because the party's radical demands like land expropriation without compensation strike a chord with brutally exploited black and coloured farm workers and threaten the parasitic interests of the white baas. What's pushed AfriForum's anti-EFF campaign into overdrive is the backing of the U.S. imperialists, who call the shots. Donald Trump read Ramaphosa and Co. the riot act at the Oval Office in May, basically ordering them to lock up Malema as a condition for any easing of the crushing 30% tariffs imposed on South Africa. Any leftists or workers' leaders who remain neutral in this case are, no matter what fancy excuses they give, guilty of wretched capitulation to the U.S. imperialist masters.

The ruling against Malema demonstrates once again that you can't fight imperialism with the butchers of Marikana. Ramaphosa and the ANC tops are hellbent on appeasing Trump and his Fifth Column supporters within the country. This will only worsen the economic and social ruin. Already, the jobs bloodbath, de-industrialisation and privatisation are speeding up week by week. Water and other basic services are totally collapsing under the pressure of imperialist austerity and rampant looting. ***Enough!*** It's urgently necessary to organise collective action to start defending ourselves against this onslaught. The defence of Malema can be a spark and a rallying point to start ***fighting back***.

The EFF has announced that it will appeal the ruling with a top-notch legal team. It is certainly correct to make use of every legal avenue available. But this struggle cannot be won with a strategy of relying on the courts. EFF militants must just remember the campaign against the fuel levy hike earlier this year, which ended in a costly defeat after the party put all its hopes on judicial challenges to stop the attack. The last thing we need is a repeat of that, which can only feed into the climate of helpless paralysis. Instead, left-wing militants in the EFF and other organisations must fight to push forward the defence of Malema with ***class-struggle*** methods. This means tying it to the struggle against imperialist austerity and for the needs of the masses. We must raise the pressure on the leaders of the mass organisations, particularly the trade unions, making a direct appeal to their members' shared interest in joining a united-front struggle against our common enemy. ***An injury to one is an injury to all!***

EFF

Marikana, 2023: Economic Freedom Fighters leader Julius Malema commemorates party founding in aftermath of 2012 ANC-led government massacre of area miners.

This approach guided the campaign to defend EFF member and trade-union activist Xolani Khoza, a campaign which ended in a rare victory when the charges were dropped unconditionally two months ago. Just as with AfriForum's campaign against Malema, right-wing reactionaries hoped to silence Xolani's opposition to the pro-imperialist "GNU." But they were forced to back down, following a year-long united-front defence campaign waged by ourselves and EFF Ground Forces along with socialists and black liberation fighters representing dozens of organisations. This is the kind of campaign needed now, on a massive scale. The EFF is calling for protest at Malema's sentencing hearing in East London on 23 January 2026. There's no time to lose. We must start ***now*** with mobilising for this protest and organising for a struggle: ***Hands off Malema! Hands off the EFF!*** ■

Kirk...

(continued from page 3)

and workers in the process. In both cases, white and black working people are pitted against one another, and the one sector of society truly responsible for the degraded status of black America, the squeezing of white workers and the bleak prospects for the younger generations—the ruling class that calls the shots—is let off the hook. In fact, they forcibly segregate black people at the bottom to better be able to set workers at one another's throats and lower the standards of what conditions pass as acceptable for white workers.

There is a way out of this cycle: to fight for more decent-paying jobs and better conditions for all and to throw open the doors of the top universities. These things will have to be fought for in opposition to both the liberals and to Trump, who is busy exploring new ways to shore up the bosses' position by stampeding most everyone else. And winning that fight is going to require assembling the strongest possible force based on unity against the common enemy. White workers will take up the black struggle not out of moral obligation, but to advance their own material interests; and black people will join together with white workers not out of blind trust, but to make headway against their segregation.

> *"There was evil, it [Jim Crow] was terrible, but black Americans are poorer today in 2024 than they were in the 1950s"* (Kirk, Jubilee "*Surrounded*," 8 September 2024).

Kirk always played fast and loose with the facts to further his narrative, while holding on to some element of truth to fend off charges of lying. Here was one such case, designed to really provoke the liberals. While technically black people are not poorer today than at that time, the persistence of deep poverty in the black inner cities and rural areas is evident to all—and he would ask why, despite the passage of the Civil Rights Act and other "anti-racist laws"?

AP

Chicago, 1966: Liberal civil rights movement led by MLK (kneeling on left) hit brick wall when confronting hellish conditions of Northern ghettos. Black oppression is not just a matter of bad ideas, as liberals contend, but is materially rooted in society, serving capitalist interests.

This question was a frontal challenge to the liberal view of the civil rights movement. In response, the liberals fell back on calling him a racist for defending Jim Crow (when he did not) or his own "blame the victim" answer. But they would not go anywhere near the uncomfortable truth: The liberal-led civil rights movement was geared not toward fulfilling the aspirations of the black masses, but toward opening the door for the black elite. So, its gains were limited to formal democratic rights, even while the fundamental conditions of life—particularly in the key areas of employment, wages, housing and education—worsened for the vast majority of the black population. Segregation is a matter of forcibly keeping the black masses at the bottom of society—and Jim Crow was just one mechanism for that.

In the face of mass social struggle, the ruling class could let go of legal segregation, because doing so gave it a much-needed image boost on the international stage, without requiring it to relax the boot on black people's neck. But the ruling class is never going to let the black masses just get up off the ground—which would be throwing away its greatest weapon for weakening the working class as a whole.

WV Photo

Spartacus Youth League at April 1978 protest against Supreme Court's racist Bakke decision, which banned quotas in education while upholding affirmative action guidelines in hiring to bust unions.

That's why the liberal movement was stopped dead in its tracks when it went North after the dismantling of Jim Crow in the South and the passage of "anti-racist" laws like the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The civil rights movement could not redress segregation in those fundamental conditions of life so long as liberal leadership bound the struggle hand-and-foot to a wing of the ruling class. To this day, black people remain at the bottom in all four key areas and more.

To change this situation will require an actual clash with ruling-class interests, not a change in what is in people's heads, whether through liberal privilege-checking or Kirk's "family values." On this score, the declining status of the labor movement since the 1950s looms large in the inability of black people to break out of poverty. The unions, under their own liberal leadership, have gone through a lengthy period of defeat and stagnation, going back to the early 1980s when attacks on the civil rights movement's limited gains picked up steam. This is no accident: white workers will never be able to rise significantly higher than the bottom layer of the class due to the downward pressure of its conditions. The unions must be strengthened to pursue the collective defense of all workers—crucially by putting the cause of black equality front and center.

> *"Blacks commit more crimes than whites do, they commit more murders, they commit more arsons, they commit more kidnappings...that's not a war on drugs that's a culture problem.... Why are so many blacks committing murders outside of their population?"* (Kirk, *ibid.*)

Current statistics show that black people committed more murders, but not more crime overall. It is also a fact that most of these killings have been black-on-black crimes. Here is another case where Kirk both exaggerated to push reactionary conclusions but touched on a real social problem that the liberals look to duck. When the subject came up, they cried racist and cited alternative statistics—knowing full well where he was going but coming off like reference to crime data unfavorable to black people necessarily feeds racism. Generally speaking, the liberals downplay the problem of black crime to pretend that nothing needs to be done. On occasion, some pointed to socioeconomic factors, like grinding poverty and poor schools, only to fall into silence when Kirk argued that these same conditions prevailed in the 1940s.

To begin, the national context was very different then versus now. In the '40s, the U.S. ruling class was at its high point coming out of World War II, and its industrial base stood head and shoulders above all others. Jobs were available for black youth to fill at the lowest rungs, and the country's rulers had such a vast social surplus that they could readily afford to establish a safety net for the poor to head off social unrest. Today, deindustrialization and a war on labor have made good jobs very hard to come by, and that safety net has been repeatedly cut back amid ruling-class concern that the cost is no longer worth it. In the intervening period, the policing of black neighborhoods has greatly intensified. Under this reign of terror, the cops round up and arrest every black person they can.

Many black people have to live under intolerable conditions—the worst housing, healthcare and schools among other things. They are trapped in impoverished, segregated neighborhoods and have minimal opportunity to get by, much less to get out. These circumstances are a breeding ground for anti-social behavior. This is not a matter of bad culture, but of desperation to survive. The answer is not, as liberals sometimes propose, either social work or more cops, who will always make any situation worse. Nor is it a transformation in values, which hold little to no meaning when food is not on the table or a roof is not over one's head. Rather, it is to provide more of the basic necessities to the black population—not by taking money and resources away from white workers, but by taking money and resources away from the ruling class, whose grip on society and its wealth creates catastrophe.

> *"What is a woman?"* (Kirk, *ibid.*)

Kirk would give a strictly biological definition and lob the question at liberals, whose identity politics unplugs them entirely from reality. For example, one liberal who obviously would be perceived as a man by society insisted: "If I decided right now that I wanted to identify as a woman, I would be a woman." Far from rallying defense of trans people, such claims so obviously at odds with the real world just turn off workers who know a whole lot better than that. "If I decided right now that I wanted to identify as a boss, I would be a boss." Right.

For Kirk, a woman is defined strictly according to physical attributes, like chromosomes and reproductive organs. Of course, it is ridiculous to argue that having a womb has no connection whatsoever to womanhood. That said, simple biology and the ability to bear children cannot give any insight into what it means to be a woman in society, which has expectations for how women are to act, speak, dress, groom and conduct themselves, the jobs they are to perform and much more. Kirk's definition of a woman reflects his political objective: to get society to shun trans people as pariahs and reinforce gender norms in the straitjacket of the patriarchal family.

In contrast, the liberals want to gain social acceptance of the right to transition between genders, only they go about it all wrong and in a way that is guaranteed to backfire. While Kirk conflated the biological and social significance of being a woman, they define womanhood as what somebody wills it to be at any given moment. This is clearly wrong in terms of biology. In an attempt to explain this away, the liberals argue that sex is not a binary (male and female), but bimodal (a spectrum with two main clusters). This dismissal of the binary as pure invention only makes it more difficult to deal with the complexities of the physical and social worlds, beginning with the rather obvious biological foundations of womanhood. Recognition of the opposite sexes in and of itself does not preclude variations, the exceptions to the rule.

The liberal claim that being a woman is simply a matter of what is inside one's head is also wrong in terms of society, which has deeply engrained gender norms rooted in major institutions, like the family. Just because womanhood is a social construct does not mean that an individual can freely determine what a woman is. Self-identifying as a particular gender does not guarantee social acceptance of that identity. Nobody knows how difficult it is to transition better than trans people themselves. At the end of the day, the breaking down of gender norms is a matter of changing society, not changing identities. The liberal focus on identity can only result in failure to combat trans oppression by isolating the movement from society.

Trans people gained a certain degree of approval in the final years of the liberal order, as the country's rulers scrambled to give the appearance of social progress to distract from their incapacity to provide anything of material value. And that "progressive" veneer was torn off as soon as it no longer suited the ruling class.

To halt the current onslaught and actually get somewhere, the trans struggle must be linked to the struggle of the working class, which has an objective interest in ushering in a new society. The way to do so is not by telling workers that they must embrace all gender expressions, but by showing them that fighting in defense of trans people is actually to their benefit, that the attacks on trans rights are a precursor to the stripping away of the rights of the working class as a whole and that trans people and workers uniting together to defend themselves can only put both groups on a stronger footing. This is urgently necessary at a time when Trump is taking every opportunity to go after trans people and workers alike.

The left's failure to counterpose real materialist arguments—in direct opposition to both the liberals and the right—has repelled workers from it en masse. Only by linking the struggles for workers' interests to the defense of the oppressed can we ensure the unity of our class and rally the forces necessary to withstand the looming attacks. Let the liberals discredit themselves by denying and dismissing workers' worries with empty moral arguments, and make clear that the left has a program to fight both wings of the ruling class. This is the only way to build a class-struggle movement to counter the attraction of reactionaries like Kirk or of the desperate lone-wolf approach. ■

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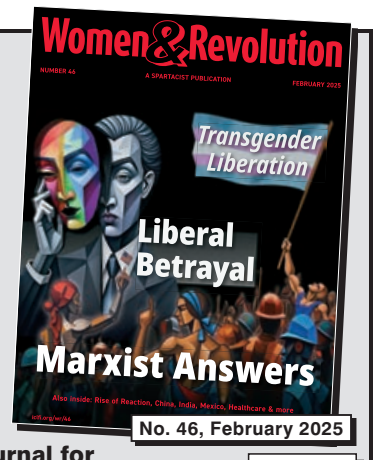

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Crackdown...

(continued from page 12)

death threats when Kirk's Turning Point USA petitioned for his firing. Dozens of others have also been victimized, and this is just the beginning.

In order to best defend ourselves against what is to come, it is necessary to be clear about what we are up against. Trump is not just some mad would-be king lashing out against his foes out of personal spite. He is on a mission ordained by the ruling class: To burn down to the ground every last trapping of the old liberal status quo in order to direct all of society's resources toward preparation for eventual war with its rivals, especially China. Trump's tariffs, squeezing of the neocolonies, building up military bases in different parts of the world, expansion of war industries and even the Gaza plan are all in accord with this objective.

Trump is going to push his agenda through one way or another. U.S. imperialism's global position is slipping, and this country's rulers can no longer tolerate anyone who gets in the way of decisive action to turn things around. The vast expansion of repressive force and thoroughgoing regimentation of the working class and all of society have their blessing. Trump assembled all his military generals and admirals in Quantico, Virginia, to ensure they got this message.

The current crackdown is ultimately directed against the working class, to ensure that it does not try to throw a monkey wrench into the grand plan. But Trump also wants to make an example of liberals who have caused him headaches. He raves about bringing down major financiers of liberal causes, like billionaire George Soros, and has gotten indictments of New York Attorney General Letitia James and ex-FBI director James Comey. Nobody is to stand in his way. But the liberals are in a quandary. Their values and institutions, which previously were the primary means of promoting U.S. pillage of the world, are now entirely out of favor, but at the end of the day they align with Trump on the key question: the need to maintain U.S. imperialism's dominance. Mainly, they don't like that he spits in their face while doing it.

It is no accident that the liberals are largely helpless in the face of Trump's vendetta. However much it pains them, he is U.S. imperialism's man of the hour. Trumpism is a modern-day version of bonapartism, which, as Leon Trotsky explained, is a regime in which the economically dominant class "finds itself compelled to tolerate—in order to preserve its possessions—the uncontrolled command of a military and police apparatus over it, of a crowned 'savior'" ("Again on the Question of Bonapartism," March 1935).

Since the moment he took office again, Trump has played precisely that role, citing one or another long-forgotten law to justify himself and shrugging off the vaunted system of "checks and balances" that the liberals put so much stock in. The courts cannot and will not stop Trump in any meaningful way, because he has the momentum of the fundamental interests of the ruling class behind him—interests that the courts themselves serve. When a court rules he cannot dispatch the Oregon National Guard to Portland, he mobilizes the California National Guard. When the states challenge that mobilization in court, he calls up the Texas National Guard. The courts are at most a minor speed bump to his designs.

The liberals have also been hoping and praying for the Democrats to get out of the coma that they've been in since the elections last November. The Democrats have been utterly impotent as an opposition to Trump and lack anything resembling a coherent plan to bring him down. There has been a lot of huffing and puffing from the likes of the California and Illinois governors—but it's been all bark, no bite. Every time the Democrats try to draw a line in the sand, such as in defense of Obamacare funding to force the federal government shutdown, it backfires. While the Democrats pretend to stand up for the everyman, Trump is attempting to slash the funding of programs in Democratic-run states and fire thousands of federal workers.

The Democrats themselves are adopting Trump's undemocratic methods in the name of defending democracy against its chief executive. Taking their cue from the "fascist in the White House," the Democrats in California (and nationally) are pushing Prop 50 to redistrict the state to favor their party in response to the Republicans having done the same in Texas. This shows that the Democrats care far more about winning seats for themselves than providing anything to reduce the misery of workers and the oppressed. This is nothing new. The only thing the Democrats accomplished under Biden was to screw over working people and get Trump re-elected. Out of favor among both workers and the oligarchs alike, the Democrats must resort to their own blatant election rigging to have any hope of taking back Congress. To count on them to save us all from Trump is like trusting a blind man to lead you through high-speed traffic.

Trump's crackdown must be challenged. But the liberals are not going to save us (or themselves for that matter) from Trump's relentless onslaught. It is a product of the most reactionary force on the planet, U.S. imperialism, going on the offensive when liberals are entirely invested in shoring up that force. The only way to get Trump to back down is to build a working-class movement of those with nothing to lose and everything to gain by impeding U.S. imperialism's march. This can only be done in opposition to both liberal and reactionary wings of the capitalist class.

But the left has other ideas—namely, to revive some kind of liberal anti-Trump resistance. Clinging to the liberalism that made the lives of workers hell will only further discredit the left in their eyes and leave the left more exposed to Trump. Echoing Democratic Party leaders, some left groups consider Trump 2.0 to mark the triumph or near-triumph of fascism in the U.S. Other left groups declare that the anti-Trump movement is stronger and more widespread than ever. And in some cases, they say both things.

These two takes on what is happening in this country are equally wrong. On the one hand, Trump's regime is plenty reactionary, but all its violence is coming at the hands of the armed forces of the state without the assistance of roving bands of extraparliamentary fascist thugs. On the other, Trump faces no serious resistance at the moment. These two seemingly incompatible exaggerations serve a common political purpose: to justify the link between the left and the liberals and absolve themselves from having to win over workers who have gone to the right.

The Party for Socialism and Liberation, Socialist Equality Party and many others on the left look to the 50501 protests (No Kings Day) on October 18 as the way to fight back against Trump. But these are Democratic Party-run protests, whose whole purpose is to try to line up people behind the hated liberal politicians. In an October 7 article, Left Voice has a whole list of demands that they want to build a contingent around in these protests, but notably missing is anything that draws a line against the Democratic Party. This renders hollow its calls to break with the Democrats. There is nothing wrong with intervening into these protests. But without drawing a line against the Democrats and their liberal politics, you are simply giving a left cover to an unholy alliance with a section of the ruling class.

A resistance against Trump that can actually beat him back is desperately needed. To bring that about, it is necessary to connect the defense of the working class to that of the left and minorities based on actual arguments for why it is in their material interests. The other obvious thing to build our defenses against Trump is for left groups to set aside petty organizational grievances and sectarian attitudes in order to mobilize the broadest possible united-front action. Anything else will leave us wide open for even more vicious attacks. ***Ditch the Democrats! Ditch the sectarianism!*** ■

Puerto Rico...

(continued from page 4)

national oppression is to struggle against U.S. imperialism.

DS engaged in its own form of abstentionism by refusing to show up to the August 31 demo. This is not a petty criticism but a necessary point to be made, especially in light of their September 1 article, which basically is a polemic against the protest. The article gives a left cover for their abstentionism and sectarianism. There's nothing wrong with having differences on the way a demo is organized, but it is necessary to show up and fight for your program if you think that's the basis on which the protest should have been organized.

It's no secret that cliquist fights are rampant in the Puerto Rican left. This does nothing to help the already small, fragmented left and just pushes the working class away from the cause. Instead, the left needs to make their political differences clear through open debate and discussion. This is the only way to clarify which path the independence struggle should go down, while showing the working class that the left is serious about fighting for revolutionary politics.

Staying home will not bring the working class out, but will just reinforce all the reasons why they themselves shouldn't join the fight. If you're going to say that there needs to be an organization of workers, then you need to go out and organize workers. If you think there needs to be an egalitarian society, then show how the rest of the left betrays that struggle. Fighting for your program, exposing what stands in the way and bringing the lessons to the workers is the only way to win them over.

The masses are angry about their conditions, but that anger is separated from the one force that can put an end to the immiseration. If the working class saw the left as real opponents of imperialism who had a clue about the needs of the class, then the working masses would be behind them. But that's not the case because the left continues to undermine workers' interests and confidence. This has resulted in the class associating the left with middle-class populist politics rather than a class-struggle program. It's time for the left to change course if it hopes to free Borikén from its colonial chains.

Build an Anti-Imperialist Alliance

Puerto Rico is of financial importance to the U.S., which bleeds the island's economy dry to fund its imperialist adventures. And as its current use as a launching pad for aggression against Venezuela and Colombia shows, it also has military importance to the U.S. This is not to mention how Puerto Rico has historically been used to counter Cuba.

Right now, there are small but frequent protests in Puerto Rico against the increased U.S. military presence. Protesters are correctly opposed to U.S. intervention into Venezuela and remember the history of Vieques. The struggle against the imperialist military, if tied to the fight for independence, can really set off wider struggle on the island.

The Trump administration has made it a point to go after different countries in Latin America, reinforcing their subservience. The new wave of attacks on these formally independent countries has made the Puerto Rican masses wary about fighting for liberation, because if the U.S. can do what it wants to larger nations like Colombia and Venezuela, it could do far worse to an independent Puerto Rico. But there is an answer to this concern. The Boricua working class shares a common enemy in U.S. imperialism with the rest of the oppressed masses of Latin America. To defend against these attacks and loosen the master's grip on the region, an anti-imperialist alliance of Latin America must be formed, uniting the struggles of the toiling masses into a dagger aimed at the colonial overlords.

And we must not underestimate the impact this could have. A serious fight by the Latin American oppressed masses against imperialist domination would inspire U.S. workers, who are also being ground down. In turn, a real fight by workers in the belly of the beast could give more breathing room to Puerto Rico and all of Latin America to continue their fight. This shows that it is not only in the material interests of these proletariats to support one another's struggles, but is also the only way to beat back the imperialist monster and win true liberation for all. ■

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Palestine...

(continued from page 1)

but after two years it remains a thorn in Israel's side. If Israel could defeat Hamas through conventional military means, it would have done so long ago. Palestinians have borne an unbearable toll, but Israel and even the U.S. have not been left unscathed by the two years of conflict. If pressure is applied at the right place, it is possible to force Israel and the U.S. to end the genocide and make real concessions.

Here the strategy most likely to give immediate results is also the one that can best advance the aim of Palestinian liberation. It consists in mobilizing working people around the world against their rulers, who either directly aid or conciliate the genocide. This is straightforward, but obviously it hasn't happened yet. We need to understand why.

Two years on, the movement cannot simply continue on the same road and pretend this is working. We must look at reality squarely and draw real political lessons. Two illusions have plagued the movement since the beginning and have hindered the prospect of deeper popular uprisings. The first is that the international community of bandits and its rigged legal system can somehow be pressured to intercede in favor of Palestine. The second is that there is an ever-rising tide of support for Palestine across the world that will halt Israel. At bottom, both rest on the false belief that liberal norms of morality will be sufficient to stop the genocide.

Diplomacy Is a Dead End

For months, political leaders throughout the world had been ramping up their rhetoric against Israel. In September, a United Nations commission of inquiry "discovered" that Israel had committed acts of genocide. Meanwhile, one Western country after another proclaimed that it "recognized" a Palestinian state. As for the Arab countries, after Israel bombed U.S. stooge Qatar, they shook their fists, declaring "Enough is enough." What glorious momentum for righteousness!

But in the hours following the Trump-Netanyahu press conference, all this diplomatic posturing and grandstanding was shown to be utterly cynical and meaningless. One after another, the leaders of the world praised Donald Trump and called for his sick plans—proposing himself and Tony Blair as overlords of Gaza—to be implemented. Support was near-unanimous, from UN Secretary-General António Guterres and Spain's "Socialist" prime minister Sánchez all the way to the Emir of Qatar and the Communist Party of China.

In one fell swoop it became clear where everyone really stood on the question of Palestine. The diplomatic noise from U.S. allies and puppets was clearly just one big maneuver to isolate the Palestinian resistance when it mattered most. As for the leaders of the Global South, they showed once again that when push comes to shove, they are happy to look on from a distance as the U.S. and Israel commit their crimes.

To anyone familiar with the Palestinian conflict, none of this came as a surprise. The real question was to determine how the Palestinian movement should react to this solid diplomatic front demanding capitulation. Should it play the diplomatic game, or expose the treachery of the international community?

In its response to Trump's deal, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) chose the former, declaring that it "values the Arab, Islamic, and international efforts, as well as the efforts of US President Donald Trump, calling for an end to the war on the Gaza Strip." Its statement accepted certain aspects of the deal while staying silent on others. While it remains to be seen whether Hamas' apparent openness to Trump's ultimatum will lead to any real concessions, its response already shows a fatal flaw in its approach.

The problem is not that Hamas agreed to negotiate certain aspects of the deal or that it engaged in empty diplomatic flattery per se. Rather, the conciliatory language it used is the symptom of a deeper problem. In attempting to diplomatically isolate Israel, Hamas essentially pulls its punches against other regimes, especially those of the Arab world. This has been a consistent trait. From its planning of October 7 all the way to its current tactics, Hamas has sought to pry the Arab regimes out of Israel's orbit and into its camp through diplomatic maneuvering.

This is the same strategy that was used by the PLO under Yasser Arafat. It is not clever but disastrous. First, because it is hopeless. If these regimes sometimes lean toward the resistance, it is only because they feel the hatred of their own people burning at their feet and need to contain pro-Palestinian sentiment. No matter how far they bend, at the end of the day their corrupt power rests on U.S. support—they will only cross their master's red lines if they have no other choice. Second, it sacrifices the Palestinian movement's strongest card in West Asia: the masses' seething anger at the conciliation of Zionism by their rulers.

Pro-Palestinian sentiment runs deep in the Arab world, from youth in Algeria demanding to be sent to Palestine to fight to sentiment among armed forces to declare war on Israel. There is little doubt that an appeal by the Palestinian resistance to the people of Egypt, Jordan and Türkiye to break the shackles of the pro-imperialist dictators who rule them and come to the aid of Gaza would cause major political turmoil. This could potentially change the balance of power in the region. Trump and his cronies are fully aware of this danger, which is one of the reasons they are eager to wrap up the conflict in favor of Israel as quickly as possible. But instead of exploiting this weakness by ***increasing the pressure*** on the hated regimes, Hamas is showering them with undeserved praise and depending on them for negotiations.

While these points apply most strikingly to the pro-American regimes of the Muslim world, they are also true more generally for the rest of the Global South and for Western countries. Around the world working masses are being squeezed more and more by their rulers, the very people who refuse to act to stop the genocide and conciliate U.S. imperialism. These people will not be maneuvered into supporting Palestine. It is only through shows of strength by the oppressed that they will concede anything of substance. The history of the class struggle is unambiguous on this point: playing nice with the oppressors never achieves anything.

Diplomatic tactics that dull the senses of the masses, feeding them false notions that their rulers can be convinced to help the Palestinians, must be rejected. This does not mean rejecting all forms of diplomacy or compromise. But to the extent that such tactics are employed, they must be aimed at advancing the struggles of the oppressed against imperialism and raising their political consciousness.

The Real State of the Movement

Following Israel's interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla, protests erupted around the world. The most important of these was in Italy, where a general strike brought hundreds of thousands into the streets. These successful mobilizations have led many in the solidarity movement to enthusiastically proclaim that the tide is rising for Palestine. In reality, the movement finds itself in a much more precarious position than appears on the surface.

In many Western countries, the hypocritical rhetoric against Israel and the largely meaningless recognition of the Palestinian state have opened up political space for mass mainstream support for Palestine. In Germany, it suddenly became OK for Zionists in the Left Party to protest for Palestine, and even warmongering Chancellor Merz claimed he would stop weapons shipments to Israel. In Australia, Labor prime minister Albanese suddenly remembered some of his pro-Palestinian credentials after years of being a loyal stooge for Israel. In both countries, it is no coincidence that the largest protests occurred almost two years after October 7, just as it is getting more acceptable to show support for Palestine.

Of course, it is a good thing that large numbers of people are protesting for Palestine. But it is important to understand the character of these mobilizations. Overall, we are not witnessing the emergence of a rising anti-imperialist tide. Rather, we are seeing the disappointed supporters of the old left-of-center parties pushed into action as they see the world they knew and loved crumble under the blows of Donald Trump and an insurgent right. While this dynamic will push many to draw more radical lessons, this will not be an immediate process. In the meantime, the pro-Palestine movement in the West is still dominated by left-liberal forces who find themselves increasingly impotent and

SYC Speaker at Bing:

How to Rebuild the Movement

The Spartacus Youth Club participated in a Students for Justice in Palestine-organized October 7 protest at SUNY Binghamton. The liberal-led student movement is small and isolated. Pro-Palestine students are repressed, and the Zionists are emboldened on campus. Instead of learning the lessons of this defeat, speakers offered moral outrage and appeals to the same administration that is repressing students. The way forward to rebuild the movement to free Palestine and defend those targeted is to link up with the workers movement. This was stressed in the SYC speech, which was edited for publication.

@syc_binghamton

SYC Photo

I'm Sandro with the Spartacus Youth Club at Binghamton. So, I just want to say, as we approach the two-year anniversary of October 7, the genocide of Palestinians remains ongoing. The movement, both on and off campus, has proven unable to slow down Israel. And I think it's not unfair to say the situation has gotten worse.

Now, we have Donald Trump's peace plan, which is nothing more than an attempt to paralyze the movement and fully escalate the Zionist colonization of all of Gaza….

The genuine anger from the students has been diverted into impotent actions. For example, there's been constant collaboration with the Democratic Party, the same party that oversaw the genocide at the beginning. Despite this, no 'progressive' Dems have broken with the party. Even now, Zohran Mamdani upholds Israel's right to exist. This is because Israel is key to American imperialism and their domination of the Middle East. But what does Israel exist for? Israel exists as a state for the genocide of Palestinians, for the constant oppression of the Middle East.

How can we be anti-Zionist while tied to the Democratic Party politicians who cannot break with this line? This movement has been brought to this point because the fundamental program it followed was one based on liberal divestment and electoral pressure. Its goal was one of shaming those in power, from the Democrats back home to the administration on campuses, to do better.

But the admin on campus are the enemies of Palestinian liberation. Working with them has only held back the struggle. It's prevented us from linking with the working class. Admin continually, continuously scapegoats 'outside agitators' to weaken the movement. But really, we need every ally we can get. We'd be better off talking to the Lockheed Martin workers about why they have a material interest in striking a blow to U.S. imperialism than begging admin for divestment. Escalation on the same program will not work while we are even more isolated and facing repression.

Even now, across campuses, students are being attacked for their pro-Palestinian views. Mahmoud Khalil is a great example of this. But even at Bing, four professors have been named on the Canary Mission website as "anti-Semitic." Students continually face Zionist harassment. We must be able to defend ourselves from these kinds of attacks without relying on admin. We must link up with the working class for a unified defense of the pro-Palestinian movement on campus. For student power—For the power of the working class! Free Palestine!"

ITALY

Weld the Palestine Movement and Working-Class Struggles

The following is a translation of a leaflet issued by our comrades of the Lega trotskista d'Italia on September 26, four days after a one-day general strike for Gaza.

On October 3, Italy was swept by the country's largest political strike in the last 20 years, called without warning by CGIL, USB and other grassroots unions immediately after the Israeli attack on the Global Sumud Flotilla. These strikes and other mass pro-Palestine protest actions have been a boost to the most active elements in the unions and shook up the Meloni government. But overall, the strikes saw limited participation by workers in industry and transport and certainly failed to "bring everything to a halt" because the majority of the working class continues to view the left and the trade unions with suspicion.

The Meloni government remains firmly in the saddle and has won important regional elections. Furthermore, with the signing of the Trump plan, the parliamentary opposition (the Democratic Party/PD, the Five Star Movement and the Green and Left Alliance) and the leaders of the CGIL trade union linked to the PD have begun a total U-turn. These forces risk paralyzing the protest movement and dragging along with them even the "radical" left, most of which is reluctantly accepting the Trump plan, albeit with some criticism.

* * *

SEPTEMBER 26—The general strike for Gaza waged by the Unione Sindacale di Base (USB) union federation exceeded everyone's expectations. Hundreds of thousands of students and workers (including many members of the CGIL trade union federation and other unions) were brought into the streets. United by a felt need to stop the blah-blah of the "international community," they took direct action by blocking ports, train stations and highways to put an end to Israeli genocide and force the Meloni government to break with Israel.

They were spurred to action by the CALP dockworkers in Genoa, who called for a strike to defend the Sumud Flotilla and make sure that nothing, ***not even a single nail***, left Italy for Israel. A million workers downed tools. While the strike did not bring the country to a standstill (especially in industry), ***it shook the government***—despite the traitorous CISL and UIL union leaders' efforts to prevent the strike and CGIL leader Maurizio Landini's call for separate strikes to keep CGIL and USB activists from joining forces.

Andrea Mancini/NurPhoto

Rome, September 22: General strike by Italian workers in solidarity with Palestine and the Global Sumud Flotilla's attempt to bring aid to Gaza.

The scale of the mobilization frightened Meloni and Salvini, who first flooded ports and train stations with police to open them and then launched a hysterical campaign against "violence" to isolate the strikers. Now they hope to prevent strikes with diversionary tactics: gibberish about recognizing a Palestinian "state" (if Hamas releases the hostages and agrees to its own destruction) and the dispatch of military ships to accompany the flotilla for "rescue purposes" (and surely prevent it from entering Gaza's port!)

Both the USB and the CGIL have said they are prepared to immediately call a general strike if the flotilla is attacked. The USB is calling for "workers to raise the issue of an embargo on all goods bound for and coming from Israel." ***Good! What needs to be done now is clear: put the dockworkers' call into action!***

• ***For a united strike if the flotilla is attacked***—not separate or symbolic strikes that divide forces, but a massive show of strength that delivers a blow against the interests of Italian businesses and puts the government on the ropes.

• Port, railway, airport and weapons industry workers must impose a ***labor boycott of Israel*** to stop arms and strategic goods. This would do more for the Palestinian people than a hundred motions by Democratic Party (PD) leader Schlein and European Commission President von der Leyen.

• ***Defend the right to defend Palestine*** by taking a stand with all pro-Palestinian activists facing repression, opposing laws that target and penalize those who strike or block infrastructure and demanding the immediate release of all arrested activists, from students in Milan to Anan Yaeesh, a Palestinian liberation fighter jailed in Italy.

Many workers are horrified by the Israeli genocide but remain passive because the link between their daily suffering and the Palestinian struggle has not been made clear. The most important thing is to get them involved in this struggle. Workers will not take action on the basis of moral exhortations or accusations of being "complicit in genocide." The only way to get workers to make the struggle for the liberation of Palestine their own is to show that supporting it is essential to defending their own interests against the common enemy.

Italy's foreign policy serves the interests of the big corporations, and they live under the American Empire's protective umbrella. Italian politicians (those in power as well as those in opposition) agree on one thing: when America gives an order, you can complain about it, but you must obey.

The U.S. is turning the screws on the world, forcing its allies to rearm and prepare for new wars, the price of which will be paid by workers. To obtain decent healthcare, education and pensions, we must oppose the EU and NATO, which are bleeding the country dry. Cancel the debt to Italian and foreign banks and financial institutions. To combat the high cost of living, we must oppose sending weapons to Ukraine. To fight layoffs and cuts in social services that were imposed in order to pay the foreign debt and finance military spending, we must beat back the reactionary assault by Trump and his allies. To win a good contract for metal workers and resolve the crisis in industry, we must overturn the economic dynamics that created it—from restructuring disguised as a green deal to tariffs to the U.S. government's plans for reshoring. To truly defend ourselves, we must oppose imperialism: ***Down with the European Union! Down with NATO! Close the bases! Not one penny or man for the Italian army!***

Many Marxist groups rightly point out that "the only way to really stop the genocide is to hurt the economic interests of Israel and its allies, starting with the Meloni government" (PCR, Revolutionary Communist Party). Others call for "escalating the pressure to get rank and file workers in the big unions (like the CGIL) involved in the struggle and make the CGIL leaders stop yammering and put the material power of the organization behind a major strike for Palestine" (FIR, Revolutionary Internationalist Faction–Left Voice). Of course, the movement must be broadened and union leaders must be pushed into the struggle. But it must be made clear to everyone that the strategy of the current union leaders is to avoid a decisive confrontation with the ruling class. Even if they were to lead mass strikes, they would try at every turn to rein them in, condemning them to defeat. Groups such as the PCR or the FIR (and they are certainly not the only ones) condemn the "limitations" of the leaderships but not their basic strategy.

What is the union leaders' strategy for Palestine? To organize strikes and protests to touch the imperialist leaders'

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isolated from the working class.

Even in Italy, where the movement took the character of mass political strikes, it would be a mistake to exaggerate its strength and even its proletarian character. While we welcome these strikes, the truth is that the Italian working class is very divided on the question of Palestine. Many resent the fact that unions that have done nothing for decades to fight for Italian workers are suddenly making a lot of noise for Palestine. This is laying the basis for a backlash, not only in Italy but throughout the West. Moreover, despite the strength of the recent strikes, the reactionary Meloni government remains in a strong position, as shown by two recent victories in important regional elections.

Whether it is in Germany, Australia, Italy or anywhere else in the Western world, the left is largely in denial of its growing social isolation. As such, it cannot even begin to understand why it has not made more progress toward winning the working class to the Palestinian cause. The truth is that many workers are sick of hearing self-righteous leftists grandstand about what is morally right as they see their social conditions worsen by the day. For the left to build real influence among the working masses, it must abandon virtue-signaling and empty symbolism and fight to advance the material interests of the oppressed.

This is true in general, but it is acutely posed when it comes to the question of Palestine. There have been countless symbolic acts against the genocide in Gaza, but very few that have caused significant material damage to the Zionist war effort. The social sectors that could land such blows, starting with the industrial working class, are generally dismissed as hopelessly backward. This attitude naturally doesn't help bring them over to the side of the Palestinians.

In the few strategic unions still influenced by radical militants, such as in the ports of Genoa in Italy and Piraeus in Greece, occasional symbolic actions are enough to send most leftists to the moon. The fact, however, is that even the most leftist and militant unions have not organized a struggle aimed at putting a decisive stop to their governments' complicity in the genocide. This is due not to a moral failing or lack of individual courage by union militants but to flawed political conceptions.

To build a Palestinian movement that has decisive social weight and can force governments to break their support for Israel, we must find a way to convince a majority of the working class to fight for this cause. This can be done, not on the basis of abstract human morality but because there is an unbreakable link between working-class exploitation at home and the international crimes of imperialism. To advance their social conditions, workers must confront their own rulers—the same people tolerating or participating in the genocide. It is also the same labor leaders who sell workers short at home who can only muster symbolic actions for Palestine. The point is that successful working-class struggle at home must bring the Palestinian question to the fore, just as much as the Palestinian struggle needs to connect with the struggles of workers on the domestic terrain.

Pro-Palestinian revolutionaries must temper the illusory and frantic enthusiasm of many in the movement, look at the situation soberly and fight hard to bridge the gap between the left and the working class. Every single call for working-class action for Palestine must be tied to concrete demands for the betterment of working conditions. Union leaders who refuse to do this must be sharply exposed. Bringing the working class into action is not the easiest route—it takes patient and systematic work. But it is the only one that can have a decisive impact on the outcome of the struggle.

The Road Forward

If we are to make the Trump-Netanyahu deal a dead letter and impose a ceasefire favorable to Palestine, we need to be guided by hard realities. Our strategic principles must be determined by what will ***genuinely advance the Palestinians' struggle***, not by self-serving moral righteousness or by what looks good on social media.

We must be clear. Great power diplomacy has not worked for the Palestinians; it never has and never will. Liberal solidarity movements have also failed. We need to bring real force to bear if we want to change the current dynamic. This force exists among the working masses of the Arab world and everywhere else. But it needs to be unleashed. For this to have any chance of happening we must disregard the impotent instruments of liberalism and seize the principles and methods of the class struggle. Only they can bring Palestinian liberation.■

No ICE on Metro

Unionists: Defend LA Bus Drivers

WV Photo

On September 25, some 60 unionists, leftists and community activists rallied outside Metro headquarters in Los Angeles to demand the immediate reinstatement of two bus drivers disciplined for speaking out in defense of immigrant riders. On their own steam, some 30 drivers had pledged to refuse ICE thugs entry to their buses; and two of them, Seán Broadbent and Jaime, publicized this stand to a local media outlet. In response, the Metro bosses summarily fired them. Coming at a time when working people are under attack on many fronts—from the anti-immigrant crackdown to mass layoffs of federal workers—the initiative taken by these bus drivers points to the urgent need to draw the unions into collective action on behalf of their members and broader layers of the class.

Significantly, initial pushback from the bus drivers and some mechanics compelled Metro to back off the firings and instead impose a 60-day unpaid suspension on Seán and Jaime. A small core of transit workers—including members of the Committee for One Fighting Transit Union (COFTU)—formed the "Unionists for Seán and Jaime" coalition to coordinate a defense campaign under the demands: "No discipline! Full back pay!" The coalition initiated and built the September 25 rally, which brought out a small number of drivers from SMART Local 1607, mechanics from ATU Local 1277 and other union militants as well as a host of left groups. These included the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), Freedom Socialist Party, Socialist Alternative, Tempest Collective, Friends of the Filipino People in Struggle, the Internationalist Group and the Spartacist League. The protest was a modest but important first step in rallying unionists and their allies in their own defense.

It also provided a forum to discuss strategy for the defense of immigrants. The DSA's answer is to appeal to the conscience of the Metro Board—in particular, liberal Democratic L.A. County supervisor Janice Hahn—to protect immigrant riders from ICE. Such pleas are bound to fail. The Metro Board oversees service and job cuts and the lack of efficient mass transit for immigrant and other riders. Hahn herself offers words of sympathy, but all for the purpose of covering for the complete lack of protections for and super-exploitation of immigrants in a city ruled for decades by Democrats.

Under pressure, Hahn opposed the firings of Seán and Jaime to undercut the momentum of the union-based defense campaign. But she refuses to do anything to get discipline dropped altogether because the last thing the Democrats want to condone is union members stepping up as a collective fighting force. Instead, she proposes that Metro inform immigrants of their rights—which does absolutely nothing to keep the ridership out of ICE's clutches. As the SL speaker at the rally argued:

> "Seán and Jaime showed their fellow union members a stand against ICE—the full weight of the union must be thrown behind the defense of immigrants. But union leaderships that look for friends among the bosses and capitalist politicians refuse to do so. At a time when many workers support Trump or are reluctant to get involved, we will be able to mobilize the numbers needed not by moral pleas but by making clear that defending immigrants is crucial to defending themselves. Defense of Seán and Jaime is a first step in bringing union power into the fight for immigrants."

We reprint below a leaflet about the rally issued by COFTU on October 13. COFTU seeks to unite the three main unions representing Metro workers into one strong fist under a leadership that fights for the interests of transit workers and the rest of the working class.

* * *

In July, SMART bus operators Seán Broadbent and Jaime shared with the *LA Public Press* that they and around 30 of their coworkers had vowed not to let unidentified, masked and armed ICE agents onboard without a warrant. As a result, they were both fired. After Seán went back to the media saying this was retaliatory, the discipline was reduced to a 60-day suspension. But this remains a threat to the rest of the workforce. So, we in the Committee for One Fighting Transit Union joined with other Metro workers to form Unionists for Seán and Jaime, holding a rally on September 25 demanding clean reinstatements with full backpay.

While the rally was small, various Metro union members, other unionists and left activists joined in. It was a success, despite the blowback we encountered. TCU Local 1315 leadership refused to engage. ATU mostly stonewalled, only sending a letter to the top dog at SMART that it then refused to make public, despite a membership motion calling for it to do so. A SMART local vice chairman wanted to speak at the rally, but leadership ordered him to stand down. Meanwhile, rumors circulated that Metro would discipline anyone who attended.

All Metro workers must defend Seán and Jaime! Metro intimidates workers who reach out to the press on safety issues in order to control the narrative. Many coworkers say "follow the policy" or "it's not your bus." But operators are like captains of a ship; they are stewards of their riders. What Metro feared most was this step toward collective action—with drivers taking safety into their own hands—while Trump says ICE can go anywhere. Unions coming together for two of their own would put us in a stronger position to defend all of us.

While all rally participants agreed on the main demands, there was open debate on how best to achieve them. The Democratic Socialists of America and others, for example, pushed for Metro to adopt a "proactive policy" to protect immigrants. But Metro already has a policy: to punish people like Seán and Jaime for standing up to ICE. Metro wants transit moving to keep profits flowing to the bosses of Los Angeles. Metro doesn't care about its own workforce, let alone immigrant riders.

The bosses will not bend to moral pressure to do right. The bottom line is all they care about. That's why COFTU demands that the unions flex their muscle. The bosses need us, we don't need them—we make the wheels turn! Keep up on the fight to defend Seán and Jaime at linktr.ee/unionists4sj. ■

Committee for One Fighting Transit Union
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Committee for One Fighting Transit Union

Italy...

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hearts and make them "become human again"—thus leaving the solution to Palestinian oppression in their hands. The CGIL calls for "governments and international institutions to take immediate action to stop what is happening, up to and including the convening of a peace conference under the auspices of the UN." The USB criticizes "the inertia of the Italian government and the European Union, which refuse to impose sanctions on the state of Israel and continue to maintain economic and institutional relations despite the gravity of the situation." To the contrary, workers must take the liberation of Palestine into their own hands by opposing the Euro-Atlantic imperialists. Workers must solve their essential problems (decent wages and jobs, workplace safety, housing, schools, hospitals, etc.) by taking the reins of society.

Appealing to the morality of the capitalists will not spur them to act against their own interests. Israel is an imperialist outpost, crucial for dominating and dividing the Middle East to protect the interests of the U.S. and the West in a region rich in oil and other resources, and from which they control global shipping routes. They are not going to give that up.

The liberation of Palestine will not be achieved by the pacifist bleating of Europe's liberal governments, which fear losing what little influence they have in the Middle East because of Trump. Macron and Starmer recognize the Palestinian "state" but continue to arm Israel and arrest hundreds of activists. The Spanish "socialist" government banned the shipment and transport of weapons from Spain (an insignificant amount), but not from Naval Station Rota, Europe's largest NATO base, from which access to the Mediterranean and the Middle East is controlled. Schlein, Conte and Fratoianni (co-chair of the Greens and Left Alliance) write motions of solidarity with Gaza but do not renounce their Euro-Atlantic loyalty that makes this peninsula an American aircraft carrier. They have already accepted tariffs, increased military spending and buying gas and weapons from the U.S.

The PD and the AVS (Greens and Left Alliance) embody everything that workers hate about the left: petty bourgeois politicians who feel superior and preach abstract ideals while trampling workers and the poor. They are the reason the far-right leaders Meloni and Salvini are in office! To broaden the struggle, ***we must completely break with Schlein, Conte and Fratoianni***. But this is precisely what neither the union leaders nor the radical left (from the USB to PAP [Power to the People Party]) are doing.

Even union leaders like Landini are seen by many workers as hypocrites who talk a lot but have not lifted a finger against the Jobs Act, the Fornero law (a market reform law against labor rights), the lockdowns and all the other measures that have ruined workers' lives. Unions are (or ***should*** be) mass organizations to defend the working class. ***Yes to unions! No to pro-capitalist leaders!***

The movement for Palestine is growing right now, so it is possible to unite the struggle against Zionism and imperialism with the struggles to meet the needs of all workers. We must fight in the unions and the workplace to do this and put ourselves in a position of strength vis-à-vis the government and the bosses. ***Now is the time*** to do this and prevent backsliding into the inertia and disaster the union leaders dragged us into in the name of partnership.

Defend the Sumud Flotilla!
Free Palestine!
Sink Meloni and Salvini! ■

SpartTalk
Italian workers strike for Palestine!
A Spartacist Podcast
sparttalk.org/2025-italy-sumud
s01e37 | 2 OCT 2025

Chicago…

(continued from page 12)

whip up the anti-immigrant backlash with their response to the migrant crisis, dumping thousands of Venezuelans in the resource-starved ghettos and barrios—setting migrants and black and brown Chicago at one another's throats for a shrinking pool of jobs, housing and schools. Betrayals like these ***drove*** workers rightward. Tired of seeing their living standards plummet and resenting liberal preaching about how ***they*** were the problem, workers went for Trump.

Today, Johnson is making a lot of noise about opposing ICE operations in the city, and the left is eating it up. But calling on the Dems to stop deportations, prosecute the Feds and close Broadview is a complete dead end. The Dems don't give a damn about defending immigrants. Pritzker's proclamations are a lot of hot air—his state troopers have mobilized to defend ICE at Broadview. Like Johnson, he's upset Trump is stepping on his turf.

Johnson, desperate to boost his approval rating, issues executive orders that (don't laugh)…direct the racist Chicago Police Department to protect immigrants. If you think this is going to work out well for immigrants, we have a bridge we'd like to sell you. As for the suggestion that state and local officials will prosecute ***federal agents***, any eighth grade civics teacher would give it a big red "F."

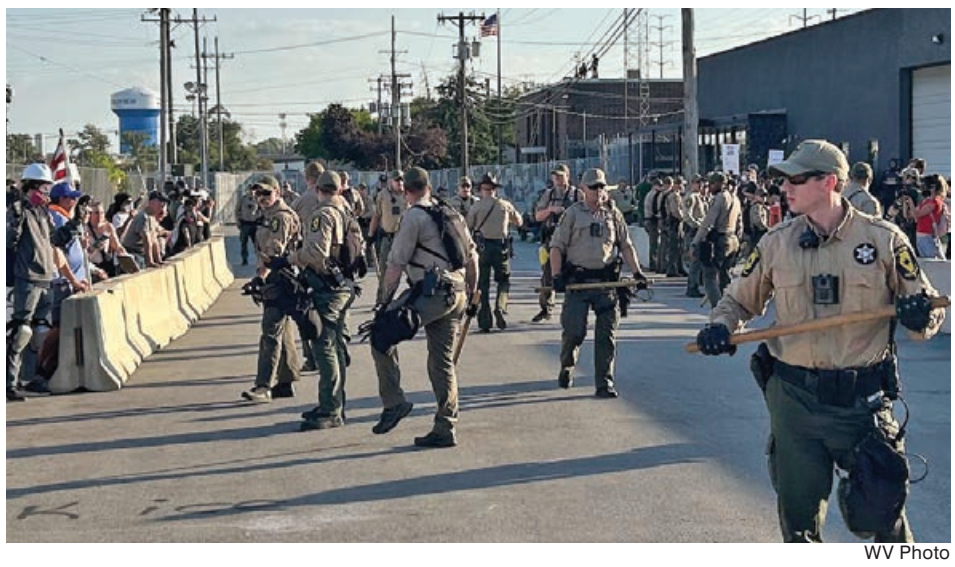
Association with the liberals makes it ***impossible*** to win workers to defend immigrants. The ***only*** way to do so is by showing them that this is ***vital*** to defending themselves. Exhortations to show empathy will go nowhere. Moreover, workers scared shitless and keeping their heads down ***won't*** be moved to action by calls on the Dems to fight. To stop the Feds from treading further, the left must ***dump the Dems***.

Immigration: A Working-Class Answer

The current push to round up immigrants is the product of the social decay of U.S. imperialism. Trump is tearing up what's left of the old liberal order because it no longer serves the ruling class in maintaining its grip on the globe. The ruling class can no longer afford to absorb millions of immigrants, and the deportation drive also serves the purpose of sowing terror as Trump overhauls the economy and liberal institutions. Trump's anti-immigrant campaign is about forcing the ***entire*** working class into submission.

The Dems bleat about Trump's excesses, worried that his methods are too disruptive to business, but they fundamentally share the understanding that what is needed right now is to shore up U.S. imperialism. This is why what pushback they offer is all about turf, the Constitution, due process, etc. How the capitalist politicians on both sides of the aisle respond to immigration is always dictated by their ***class interests***. They open the spigot and flood the labor market with immigrants when the capitalists need more labor and shut it when they need less.

A steady supply is always available because imperialist pillage drives immigrants from their homelands. Those let in are pressed into service as a cheap pool of vulnerable labor and a convenient tool to divide the working class. It isn't about which capitalist party is in power (right-wing Republican then-governor Bruce Rauner signed off on Illinois' "sanctuary state" law and Democrat Barack Obama was "Deporter-in-Chief") but what best serves the ruling class at a given time. The ***size*** of the pool of cheap immigrant labor is ***debatable*** among the country's rulers, but its ***maintenance*** is never in question.



WV Photo

Broadview ICE detention center, October 4: Pritzker's state troopers barricade protesters to clear the way for federal immigration agents.

Workers ***don't*** have a built-in interest in having more immigrants in the country, contrary to what the left argues. They also ***don't*** have an interest in supporting deportations. Their interest lies in ***ensuring the best conditions for immigrants***. The view that more immigration is inherently progressive leads the left to stand at attention and declare that "we're all on the same side" whenever the liberals say that "immigrants are welcome here." But we are ***not*** on the same side.

The welcoming Democrats are nothing more than recruiters of immigrant labor for brutal exploitation by the bosses. They won't defend immigrants because, like the Republicans, they represent a ruling class bent on squeezing immigrants and workers in general to stop its downward slide. Declaring Chicago a "sanctuary city" is not about keeping immigrants safe, but keeping them in a degraded status. The left will only be able to make headway in the defense of immigrants if it rejects the "sanctuary city" scam and fights to mobilize labor ***independently of***, ***and against***, the Democrats and Trump alike.

Mobilizing Labor Power Will Take a Fight!

To date, the left's efforts to connect the defense of immigrants to working-class struggle have been entirely insufficient even when directly posed, like in the months-long Mauser strike. The heavily immigrant workforce, represented by Teamsters Local 705, walked off the job in June, demanding an end to abysmal work conditions and protections against ICE workplace raids. The liberal-aligned union leaders, though, have not waged the battle to win. They have not mobilized the 17,000 members of Local 705 getting shafted by UPS, much less other trade unionists, in a show of labor strength on mass picket lines. Nor have they dispatched organizers to unionize other non-union Mauser facilities nationally and immigrant workers throughout the city. The strike could have been the launching pad for working-class defense of immigrant Chicago and shown the way to truly make the city welcoming to immigrants—by putting the union in charge of safety and establishing the right to resume the strike in response to ICE roundups.

Teamsters Local 705

Striking Teamsters at Mauser's Little Village plant in Chicago with supporters at June rally.

But instead of charting such a path, the left has limited itself to expressions of solidarity without doing anything to challenge the union bureaucracy's losing strategy, which is dictated by what is acceptable to the Democrats they view as allies. This is made explicit at Mauser rallies, where liberal politicians are trotted out to pledge their "support" in a con game to prevent any real fight. Johnson visited the picket lines to proclaim that "ICE agents do not get to run amok" and "disrupt and destabilize our communities and our workplaces." All this professed love from the Democrats has proved entirely worthless from the moment it was uttered. The Mauser bosses have not budged and are now moving to shut down the struck plant altogether, and ICE is running amok throughout Chicago.

The Teamsters bureaucrats are far from alone in trying to rehabilitate the mayor in the eyes of working people. The CORE leadership of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) holds up Johnson's brief stint as a teacher and a union organizer as proof that he is on "our side." But he turned in his union card to take over City Hall and now answers first and foremost to the landlords, bankers and bosses of Segregation City. How did the teachers fare with their new contract under Brother Johnson's administration? It looked pretty good on paper, but it was all smoke and mirrors. In what can only be described as a highly cynical ploy by the CTU tops and City Hall, this contract was not even fully funded for the first year. But teachers were strung along just enough to ensure the leadership's re-election, only for Johnson to ax 1,400 jobs! If this is how he treats his own (former) union, everybody else better watch out.

Such "partnership" with Johnson undermines the defense of the unions, just like it undermines the defense of immigrants, and is ***counterposed*** to linking the two struggles against the class enemy. Giving a pass to the union bureaucrats who lock arms with the Democrats, as many left groups do, or otherwise failing to provide an alternative course of working-class struggle only perpetuates the problem.

To Build Black and Brown Unity, Give Brandon the Boot!

Black Chicago got its first taste of Fed occupation last week when agents rampaged through a South Shore apartment building and tore the place apart. But there is little pushback from the black population, and few black people are at the demonstrations. Why?

The divide between black and brown Chicago is wider than it was when Johnson took office because of how he handled the migrant crisis. What did the left do? Call for empathy for the migrants while blaming the "backwardness" of black people who objected to immigrants being dumped in their neighborhoods. The Revolutionary Communist Party went so far as to poster Hyde Park with such diatribes. As for Freedom Road Socialist Organization, they rallied behind Johnson on the totally liberal basis that as a black mayor he represents the black masses. But he doesn't. Black Dems like Johnson, who often come from the better-off layer of the oppressed black population, are enforcers for the white ruling class. This is evident in his handling of the migrant crisis. After all, he could have housed the immigrants in millionaire's mansions. But then he would have been out of a job.

Black Chicago should defend immigrants because doing so is crucial to their own defense, let alone to make any strides in the fight for black liberation. Things are certainly not looking up right now. Trump's reactionary attacks on liberal DEI programs—which themselves fuel racial divisions—have only thrown suspicion on the accomplishments of black people and painted targets on their backs. Black unemployment is on the rise in the city and nationally. The mobilization of the National Guard—and Johnson's salute to the local police in response—promises more racist cop terror.

In the face of the turmoil, black people have every reason to link their struggle to that of other sections of the working class, who all share a common enemy. Defending immigrants is particularly important at the moment because every success of the ruling class on this front will be used to further throw back black struggle. Whenever the authorities launch mass roundups, it's never long before black people are in their sights. Immigrants and the rest of the working class must likewise fight to smash the segregated setup that keeps black people at the bottom, which is the main club used by the bosses to drive down everyone's conditions. Once again, this approach is incompatible with clinging to Johnson.

We don't want to see more leftist youth spin out of politics from disillusionment once the reality sets in that their efforts are not bearing fruit. The struggle to defend immigrants must be put on a firm and consistent working-class basis and the fight for the same strategy extended into the labor movement. This is the ***only*** way forward. ***Dump the Dems!*** ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Chicago Left: Dump the Dems to Defend Immigrants

Alexandra Buxbaum/Sipa (inset); Ashlee Rezin/Chicago Sun-Times

Inset: Chicago mayor Brandon Johnson (left) and Illinois governor JB Pritzker protest Trump's threat to send in National Guard, insisting city cops can oppress immigrants just fine. Right: Border Patrol and ICE agents storm through downtown Chicago in September.

Trump's anti-immigrant blitz is sweeping Chicago. Silverio Villegas-Gonzalez was gunned down, and over a thousand people have been arrested since early September. Armed Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) officers march in Millennium Park and boat down the Chicago River, Feds rappel down from helicopters onto a rooftop to terrorize apartment residents in the middle of the night. From hardware stores to homeless shelters, suburban factories to public schools—there's nowhere the Feds aren't treading.

Those protesting this offensive have shown no lack of determination, braving pepper balls, tear gas, rubber bullets and arrest at the Broadview processing facility. But these protests are small, isolated and liberal-dominated.

This clearly needs to change. Trump is ramping up the concentration of force on his side, as the National Guard waits in the wings. To have any chance of holding him off, our efforts must focus on bringing out the organized working class, which has the social weight to give some real heft to the defense of immigrants—and every reason to take up that defense. Workers across the city have been taking it in the teeth, and it will be impossible to change that as long as a large portion are forced into the shadows. The struggle to defend immigrants must be fused with the fight for better living standards for all.

But this has not happened. Why? Trade-union leaders are too busy seeking favors from City Hall or Trump himself to cause waves, and Chicago's left is too busy finding common cause with justly hated liberals, above all "Mayor 6%" Brandon Johnson. He promised to make Chicago work for working people—and didn't. Instead, he's laying off city workers and taxing us to death to balance the books for the LaSalle Street bankers and bosses who pull his strings.

Liberal Democrats like Johnson helped

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Trump's Crackdown

Liberals Won't Save Us (or Themselves)

Evan Vucci/AP; Alex Brandon/AP (inset)

Quantico, Virginia, September 30: War Secretary Hegseth (front left) and top generals get marching orders from Trump, who wants troop occupations of cities to clear out "enemy from within." Inset: Trump flashing his presidential memorandum targeting the left.

Trump is on the warpath against the left with renewed fury coming off Charlie Kirk's assassination. In rapid succession, the White House strongman issued an executive order that classifies antifa (an ideology) as a "domestic terrorist organization" and National Security Presidential Memorandum-7, which expands the list of targets of this massive state repression to any and all perceived opponents of his government. These include organizations said to endorse "anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism, and anti-Christianity; support for the overthrow of the United States Government; extremism on migration, race, and gender; and hostility towards those who hold traditional American views on family, religion, and morality"—basically, anything to the left of a Fox News pundit.

The latest measures are a serious escalation of Trump's unrelenting efforts to stomp out dissent. They make advocacy and financing of leftist political activity a crime, not to mention participation in it. The administration is marshaling vast resources of the state machinery, from the FBI's national and local Joint Terrorism Task Forces to the IRS, to pursue this crackdown. Already, Trump has invoked supposed antifa protests outside federal immigrant detention facilities in Portland as grounds to send in the National Guard. The Party for Socialism and Liberation and several Muslim and community activists in New Jersey have been sued by the Feds for protesting the "auction" of West Bank Palestinian lands to Jewish Americans for settlement. Rutgers University professor Mark Bray, who taught courses about fascism and wrote a book about antifa, fled the country after receiving

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